UNITED NATIONS

EP

UNEP/EA.1/INF/22

Distr.: General
16 June 2014

English only

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme**

**United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme**
**First session**
Nairobi, 23–27 June 2014
Items 5 and 6 of the provisional agenda*

**Policy issues**

**Follow-up to and implementation of the outcomes of United Nations summits, in particular the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, and major intergovernmental meetings of relevance to the United Nations Environment Assembly**

# Process to prepare a United Nations system-wide strategy on the environment

## Note by the secretariat

*Summary*

The present note provides additional information concerning the plan for the preparation of a United Nations system-wide strategy on the environment and the scope and objectives of such a strategy, as requested by member States during at the first open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and at a subsequent meeting of its subcommittee, held in March and May 2014, respectively.

*UNEP/EA.1/1.

# I. Introduction

1. In accordance with the mandate of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Executive Director to coordinate the environmental programmes of the United Nations system set out in General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII) as well as in the Nairobi Declaration on the Role and Mandate of UNEP, adopted by the Governing Council at its nineteenth session and endorsed by the Assembly in the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (see resolution S/19-2), and pursuant to paragraph 88 of the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, entitled "The future we want", and Governing Council decisions 27/2 and 27/5, the Executive Director intends to initiate a process for the preparation of a United Nations system-wide strategy on the environment. Such a strategy would serve as an overarching umbrella to cover the entire scope of the environment, corresponding to the role of UNEP as the principal United Nations body in the field of the environment. Under such an umbrella strategy, a number of subsets of strategies concerning specific thematic areas, each of which might be led by a different United Nations body or specialized agency, could be formulated, as called for in paragraph 88 of "The future we want".

2. At the first open-ended meeting of the Committee of Permanent Representatives and at a subsequent meeting of its subcommittee, held in March and May 2014, respectively, member States requested the Executive Director to provide additional information concerning the plan for the preparation of a United Nations system-wide strategy on the environment and the scope and objectives of such a strategy.

3. In response to those requests, the present note provides additional information on the objectives and core elements of a possible United Nations system-wide strategy on the environment and the process envisaged for preparing such a strategy.[1]

# II. Objectives and core elements

4. A United Nations system-wide strategy on the environment would ensure the coherence of relevant policies and the effective coordination of the diverse services, activities and programmes provided by the United Nations system in the field of the environment in the light of the mandate of UNEP and the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. It is thus intended to strengthen the collaborative partnerships among United Nations system organizations in the field of the environment.

5. A United Nations system-wide strategy, as a framework of such collaborative partnerships, would:

(a) Set out a United Nations system-wide medium- and long-term vision in the field of the environment;

(b) Identify common and/or complementary policies and approaches concerning emerging and important environmental issues of global concern;

(c) Establish processes to coordinate the planning and execution of United Nations system activities supporting the implementation of internationally agreed environmental objectives and goals;

(d) Assess the effectiveness of United Nations system-wide activities in the above-mentioned areas.

6. A United Nations system-wide strategy would encompass a number of substrategies pertaining to specific thematic issues, some of which may already exist under the leadership of a specific United Nations body or specialized agency. It would therefore help United Nations system organizations to remove duplication and overlaps in environment-related activities and optimize the use of available resources.

7. A system-wide strategy would serve as a tool to assist the United Nations Environment Assembly in carrying out its function of providing general policy guidance for the direction and coordination of environmental programmes within the United Nations system and review the implementation of those programmes, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 2997 (XXVII).

[1] See also UNEP/EA/1/2/Add.3.

8. The system-wide strategy will be developed and implemented fully respecting the mandate and autonomy of the respective organizations of the United Nations system. Each organization, on the basis of its mandate, would continue to determine its policies and decide on its activities in the area of the environment and, in so doing, would be expected to draw upon the system-wide strategy. It is hoped that through the endorsement of a United Nations system-wide strategy by States members of the respective organizations through their governing bodies, the strategy will be integrated into their policies and programmes in the field of the environment.

9. In order to remain relevant and provide useful guidance for the United Nations system organizations, a system-wide strategy will need to set out assessment and evaluation procedures and processes for the regular updating of its priorities and approaches. In this context, such a strategy will need to be operationalized through a dynamic process of continued consultations and interactions among the United Nations system organizations.

## III. Preparatory process

10. The Executive Director will initiate a process for the preparation of a United Nations system-wide strategy in collaboration with the executive heads of all the relevant United Nations system organizations. The Environment Management Group and other relevant existing inter-agency coordination mechanisms will provide a platform for consultation among those system organizations.

11. A two-and-a-half-year process, from the second half of 2014 until the end of 2016, is currently envisaged for the preparation of a draft United Nations system-wide strategy. Throughout the process, the Executive Director will provide regular briefings to the Committee of Permanent Representatives to update it on progress made. The following steps are envisaged in the preparatory process:

(a) Information collection and system-wide mapping (data analysis, review of agencies' strategic policies and actions plans on environment, review of audits and other evaluations of the environmental activities of United Nations agencies, reporting modalities, et cetera);

(b) Inter-agency consultations through the Environment Management Group and other relevant coordination mechanisms;

(c) Liaison with other relevant United Nations inter-agency mechanisms, including UN-Water, UN-Energy and UN-Oceans, in order to identify United Nations-wide action plans and possibilities for further enhancing coherence;

(d) Provision of regular updates and progress reports to the Committee of Permanent Representatives in the course of 2014–2016;

(e) Submission of the draft strategy to senior officials of the Environment Management Group at their annual meeting in September 2015;

(f) Submission of the draft strategy to the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination and its committees, namely, the United Nations Development Group, the High-level Committee on Programmes and the High-level Committee on Management, at their respective meetings in the first half of 2016;

(g) Submission of a progress report, including the draft strategy, to the United Nations Environment Assembly for consideration at its second session, to be held in 2016;

(h) Submission of the draft strategy to the General Assembly for consideration at its seventy-first session, to be held in 2016.

12. The United Nations Environment Assembly may recommend that the General Assembly invite the governing bodies of the relevant United Nations bodies and specialized agencies to take the system-wide strategy, upon its finalization, into account in formulating and implementing their respective strategies and programmes of work related to the environment.